

Rescuing Romance SAA Workshop

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Abstract

Midway through III.ii of *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina speaks truth to power. Cataloguing Leontes' acts of "tyranny" (betraying Polixenes, seeking to poison Camillo's honor, casting forth to crows his baby daughter and causing both Mamillius' and Hermione's deaths) she tells him to "run mad indeed, stark mad" (181) and to betake himself to "nothing but despair" (207-8). Power obligingly accommodates her. "Go on, go on," Leontes says. "Thou canst not speak too much; I have deserved / All tongues to talk their bitt'rest" (212-14), and when she apologizes tells her, "Thou didst speak but well / When most the truth" (230-1), which he prefers to being pitied. Imagining a woman speaking truth to power in our current moment is challenging. It's even more difficult to imagine the same forces of power asking women to regularly remind them of their flaws. But in some ways the institution of theater itself replicates the imbalances of power at work in the first half of the play. What "rescue," if any, is practically or even theoretically possible? This essay looks at two different ways a production might handle such challenges.

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Abstract

Imogen and Marina as Working Girls: Shakespeare's Princesses Who Earn a Living

MARINA: Here's gold for thee.
If that they master would make gain by me,
Proclaim that I can sing, weave, sew, and dance,
With other virtues which I'll keep from boast,

And I will undertake all these to teach.
I doubt not but this populous city will
Yield many scholars.

(*Pericles*, Sc. 19, 227-233, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Roger Warren)

Marina in *Pericles* exploits her royal accomplishments of singing, composing and embroidering to buy her way out of the brothel. Like Imogen, she displays a characteristic common to most of Shakespeare's comic and tragi-comic heroines: adaptability. While much ink has been spilt on Viola's flexibility in turning (in one line) from mourning her brother's death to planning her immediate future as a eunuch singing for Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, much less attention has been paid to Marina, who demonstrates remarkable resilience in the face of misogynistic abuse, and real danger.

Shakespeare's audience had living memory of a queen on a throne. The idea of princesses raised with a Humanist education, preparing them to rule if necessary, would not have been foreign to them. However, in Marina's case, the princess turns her skills with aplomb in arenas that are completely unforeseen. Obviously, her resilience and adaptability contribute to her characterization as ideal young woman, a perfect future ruler of Tyre. Yet, Shakespeare could have achieved this idealized portrait without showing Marina earning her bread. Marina's wages, paid to her for her work, give her an agency and self-sufficiency that would have been viewed as extraordinary in a gently raised lady of Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare has used the device of women earning a living before, with Viola, but Viola was merely a gentleman's daughter, not a princess. Moreover, as with Imogen, she had to disguise herself as a boy to snag a job. In contrast, the royal Marina is employed as a woman. This paper aims to investigate further what is achieved by giving Marina a spate as "working girl." In a contemporary production of the play, it makes it more difficult for an audience to tolerate Marina's silence when Pericles promises her to Lysimachus without consulting her wishes, in addition to her silence after she embraces her mother (line 66) which lasts for the rest of the play (line 124). How should a contemporary actress navigate Marina's diminishment from the resourceful, persuasive, brave young woman who escapes the brothel and makes an independent life for herself in Mytilene, to the speechless pawn that Pericles passes to a fellow male ruler?